

# Project Proposal:

## USDA State & Private Forestry Grant



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Applicants: Florida Division of Forestry

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Project: Habitat Quality Enhancement Program

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Project Co-Leads: Steve Bohl  
Florida Division of Forestry  
(850) 414-9914  
[bohls@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:bohls@doacs.state.fl.us)

David Speake  
Florida Division of Forestry  
(850) 414-9915  
[speaked@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:speaked@doacs.state.fl.us)

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**Project Proposal Abstract:** Conservation and sustainability of forest landscapes has been a priority for the State of Florida for many years. Florida's population has experienced nearly a 23% growth rate in the past decade and this trend continues to increase. Collaboration between government, private sector and educational institutions have assessments that denote locations of critical zones of focus for the continued sustainability of forest lands for protected water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation, forest products and other ecosystem services that healthy forest lands provide. The State of Florida currently has one of the most aggressive public land acquisition program in the nation. As a result the Division of Forestry managed lands has significantly increased and many of these state forest lands have restoration needs. To this end there is a program called the Upland Ecosystem Restoration Project (UERP) and three state forests have been identified for participation. Upland ecosystems in Florida depend on frequent fire to sustain ecosystem function, ecological diversity and wildlife resources. Unfortunately, changes in land use and incompatible fire and timber management have greatly altered plant communities resulting in population declines of northern bobwhites and numerous other fire dependent wildlife species. Additionally, several of the state forests can provide enhanced habitat for wild turkey through the application of certain management practices. The Division of Forestry has many partners that are willing to assist with these types of projects.

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**Partnering Agencies and Groups:** Tall Timbers Research Station; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; Wild Turkey Federation; and other conservation organizations.

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**Project Location:** State of Florida

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**Expected Completion Quarter:** Q4 2010

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**Total Federal Funding Request:** \$170,000 (FY '08 – \$55,000, FY'09 - \$60,000, FY'10 - \$55,000)

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**Total Proposal Budget (Including Matching Funds):** \$340,000

Cost Category	REQUESTED	MATCH
Personnel	\$5,000	\$85,000
Materials & Supplies	\$5,000	\$5,000
Equipment	\$5,000	\$5,000
Travel	\$5,000	\$20,000
Contracts	\$150,000	\$30,000
Printing/Publication		\$5,000
Administration		\$40,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$170,000</b>	<b>\$170,000</b>

## Project Description and Benefits:

Florida's aggressive acquisition programs have resulted in acres that have been added to the state forest system that are in the need of restoration. Upland ecosystems in Florida depend on frequent fire to sustain ecosystem function, ecological diversity and wildlife resources. Unfortunately, changes in land use and incompatible fire and timber management have greatly altered plant communities resulting in population declines of northern bobwhites and numerous other fire dependent wildlife species. There are specific locations on three state forests that can benefit from implementing these types of practices, including thinning of southern yellow pine species. In addition to these specific areas, we are proposing to sponsor the National Wild Turkey Federation to conduct research, to assist in making management recommendations, and improve habitat for this game species, that can consist of wild opening, enhance prescribed burning or mechanical treatments. As resources, including funding, become increasingly scarce, it is essential to have guidance to allocate resources where they will provide the most enhancements across the landscape.

The measurable results of these two program activities will be provided to the Division of Forestry service foresters so that depending upon landowners' objectives, the service foresters can make recommendations to meet these types of objectives, and to assist them with restoring degraded resources across the landscape. Additionally the resulting information can provide tools for DOF to focus future program delivery of cooperative forestry programs.

## National Relevance:

This type of research, modified management, treatments to degraded resources meets the objectives of the Redesign of State and Private Forestry programs. The results of these projects will become a tool to provide guidance for future efforts in the delivery of future state and private forestry programs. Specific components of these types of research on state forest land will provide the opportunity to conserve, protect and enhance the benefits across the forest landscape.

Conserve Working Forest Landscape – This project will provide the most up-to-date information for the identification of important forest land areas across the state. The resulting data will have positive effects on sustainable forestry, landscapes, land use change, wildfire reduction from the treatment and natural community enhancement will promote conservation of healthy forest land.

Protect Forests from Harm – The resulting information gained from this the actually treatments assessment will provide decision makers with a tool to protect important forest lands from hazards such as wildfire, insect and disease and invasive plant infestation and fragmentation of the forested landscape.

Enhance Benefits Associated with Trees & Forests – These treatments and the outcomes of the research will provide the most up-to-date information to provide direction for management on specific sites where sound management practices will provide the most benefit and enhancement to the overall forest landscape. This is increasingly important to identify and provide on-the-ground management.

## Regional Relevance:

These projects will address the issues of relevance to the southern region including; **Fractured Forests, Wildland Fire and Forest Fuels, Changing Forest Products Markets, Forest Health and Water Quality and Quantity.** By the treatments to these ecosystems we can better make recommendations to forest landowners to eliminate fragmentation; these treatments will reduce forest fuels that could lead to less disastrous effects of wildfire; results would lead to improved forest health; and result better non-point water quality.

Prioritization – This research and treatment will assist prioritizing similar treatments on private forest landowners, and on other public land where the Division of Forestry has agreements to provide technical assistance. Based upon these enhanced forest land are critical need for continued forest health and sustainability.

Meaningful Scale – This has application state-wide and will provide meaningful landscape scale for the conservation of important forest landscapes. The results will be shared with other states and other organizations as requested.

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**Project Evaluation Criteria**  
**Discussion: (Continued)**

Collaboration – These programs are being initiated through the Wild Turkey Federation, Florida Wild Turkey Federation, Tall Timbers Research Station, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. However, there are other public entities involved with these programs.

Outcomes – This will collect relevant biological data, completing project plans in support of conservation goals, and apply techniques across landscapes. These techniques and projects can be applied to similar landscapes, and be able provide the highest return on investment for public benefits from forests.

Technology – All research and applied project will be documented using technology to develop overlay maps that provide graphic representation of important landscape areas, based upon issues/needs of national, regional and state wide.

Integrated Delivery – This project will provide information that can be shared with other state agency partners as well as non-governmental organizations and private forest landowners. This information can be specifically utilized in promotion of cost-share program delivery and as an educational tool for public and private landowners delivered through Florida DOF service foresters.

Leverage – This project will leverage funding and in-kind contributions from the agencies listed above as well as the Florida Division of Forestry.

Influence Positive Change – These projects will provide application on important landscapes across disciplines. Areas targeted for treatment and conservation, protection and enhancement across forested landscapes. These treatments will provide the DOF and other partners with a versatile tool to enhancing and restoring areas of need that will provide the most opportunity for positive changes to Florida's overall forested landscape.

Timeliness – These multiple treatment areas and projects will occur during FFY 08 through 10.

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Project Evaluation Criteria  
Discussion (Continued):